



WEST CORK SUDBURY SCHOOL

REIMAGINING EDUCATION | NURTURING INDEPENDENT MINDS



Trust | Respect | Freedom | Responsibility

Join West Cork Sudbury School (WCSS) in a movement towards a revolutionary education model where students play an equal part in the democratic running of the school, shaping their unique learning experiences.

To see our kids growing under the caring guidance of the facilitators has been amazing. This school has very much given our kids a voice and an understanding that their voice is valid and can influence change. **PARENT**

I'm not exaggerating when I say it changed our lives. They feel they can come with their ideas and that those ideas can be explored in a practical way that makes them learn way more. **PARENT**

FURTHER TESTIMONIALS
CAN BE FOUND HERE:



The Sudbury model of education is built on

TRUST

...that we are all unique learners and deserve time to explore what interests and motivates us.

RESPECT

We respect ourselves, others and the world around us, celebrating a diversity of abilities and interests.

FREEDOM

At WCSS students will have the freedom to follow their own educational path and be given the space, time and support to reach their goals.

RESPONSIBILITY

The school meeting nurtures a strong sense of responsibility to meet the needs of both the group and the individual.

OUR VISION

We support children and teenagers to take the lead in their education within a nurturing democratic community. WCSS embodies the principles of justice, equity and inclusivity, embracing the uniqueness of each person. We are committed to serving as a beacon of good practice, empowering individuals to contribute meaningfully, regardless of age or abilities.

SOME OF OUR CORE VALUES

- We believe children and teens will flourish when given the space, resources and support to follow their passions at their own pace and in their own unique way.
- We believe in the importance of play, and that through free age-mixing children and teens are able to develop their social skills and empathy in a meaningful way.
- We believe children and teens should be given the freedom to make their own choices, which can then lead on to an understanding of the responsibility that this entails. In this way children and teens take ownership of their education, enabling them to become engaged, conscious and self-motivated members of their communities.
- We believe that our planet and local environments should be considered and respected. To that end, we take into account bio-diversity, climate change, social justice, ecological integrity and other ethical issues when making decisions that affect the running of our school.
- We see that the changing nature of our world calls more and more for the abilities the Sudbury model of education nurtures, such as personal & collective responsibility, critical thinking and creativity.

“If you can light the spark of curiosity in a child, they will learn without further assistance.”
KEN ROBINSON



HOW DO OUR STUDENTS LEARN?

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

Guided by the principles of play-based and experiential learning, West Cork Sudbury School (WCSS) empowers children to steer their own education.

Students are immersed in a supportive educational environment, with the freedom to make choices. With the help of tutors and peer-to-peer learning, they collaborate with staff to explore topics through independent studies. It is a model that celebrates the innate curiosity of every learner where instead of being taught, students learn how to learn.

By directing their own education, our students cultivate skills to navigate conflicts, build confidence and self-initiative as well as actively participate in a democratic community.

They excel in problem-solving, teamwork and critical thinking, all desirable skills in the current workforce.

The diverse interests of our students are reflected in our school clubs, projects and classes that emerge organically.

Read on for some examples!

CLUBS

SCIENCE CLUB demonstrates the excitement of hands-on science by exploring concepts such as reflection and refraction, robotics, catapult designs, electronics and more.



As part of Science Week and Engineer's Week, students used Newton's Laws to build self-propelling cars and designed a Lego bridge that had to support a 2kg weight.

NATURE CLUB is one of the spaces where we use our whole bodies to learn – through growing vegetables to bushcraft to learning how to use tools responsibly. Activities include: starting and minding campfires; working with natural building materials like willow and bamboo; use of and caring for knives, axes, saws and chisels; basic wood carving; orienteering; plant identification and foraging.

CLASSES

In addition to independent studies, students can request classes on topics they want to study in depth. Students have independently studied for QQI courses, followed a maths curriculum, taken online coding courses or studied languages. Language tutors are amongst the most popular, with Japanese classes reaching Leaving Cert level in just one year. Students also frequently request math and literacy lessons as well as classes in music, chemistry, archaeology and geography.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

At WCSS, we cherish hands-on learning and play as invaluable tools for all ages.

Our understanding aligns with the natural enquiry process of play. From researchers like Dewey to Vygotsky and modern neuroscience, the benefits of play for speech development, self-awareness, cognitive processing and brain refinement are well-documented.

Through free age-mixing, older and younger children learn from and nurture one another. This dynamic interaction shapes their concept of themselves as mature and caring individuals.

Recent research emphasises the importance of play for adults, supporting creativity, stress reduction and overall well-being.

WCSS is a community where students and staff play together, resulting in a lifelong appreciation for play and learning.

FIND OUR RESEARCH LISTING HERE:



PROJECTS

Creativity takes centre stage at WCSS, exemplified by projects like our *Trashion Show*.

This particular project came to life through shared interests in sustainability, fashion, film-making and video editing, costume and set design as well as hair and make-up artistry.

Collaborating with local experts, students received advice from a seamstress and a filmmaker.

Together they designed and fashioned outfits and costumes from upcycled materials, old fabric and waste, culminating in an outdoor *Trashion Shoot* and documentary film, available on our YouTube channel.

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO WATCH THE FILM AND TO BROWSE OUR YOUTUBE CHANNEL:





If freedom, personal responsibility, self-initiative, honesty, integrity, and concern for others rank high in your system of values, and if they represent characteristics you would like to see in your children, then you will want to be a trustful parent. [...]

Trust promotes trustworthiness.

Self-initiative and all of the traits that depend on self-initiative can develop only under conditions of freedom.

PETER GRAY

THE NEED FOR SCHOOLS SUCH AS OURS

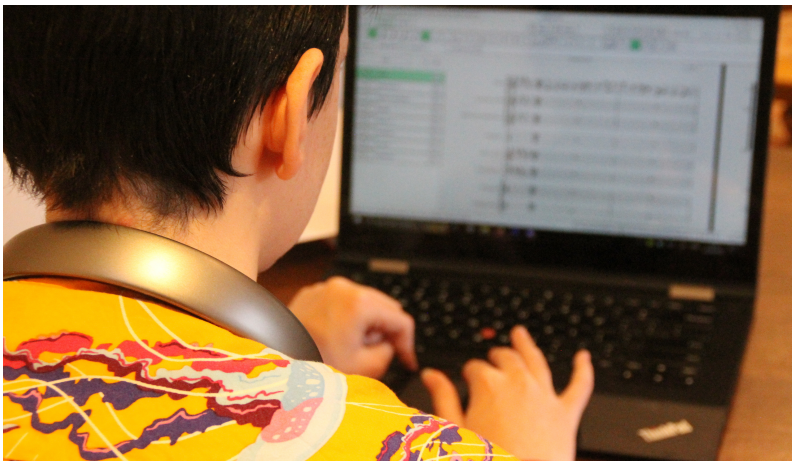
The need for intervention in schooling was highlighted during the National Association of Principals and Deputies Symposium 2022 by its director, Paul Crone:

Many intelligent students are failing to excel in school due to our rigid education system's focus on 'dogmatic rote learning'.

Paul Crone could have been describing WCSS in his suggested intervention:

This requires a new vision for education in Ireland, one based on the individual, their aptitudes, and what they can bring to society. When we value each individual, we create for them an environment in which to discover their abilities and skills and flourish. This will encourage students to lead their own education and encourage independent learning.

SINCE THE 1950s A LARGE BODY OF RESEARCH HAS BEEN DEVELOPED TO SUPPORT THE SUDBURY APPROACH. SEE OUR RESEARCH LISTING HERE:



Thank you for joining us in building a brighter future for alternatives in education!

[...] a child's greatest achievements are possible in play, achievements that tomorrow will become her basic level of real action and morality.

LEV S. VYGOTSKY



HOW WE WORK

We are democratic

Students actively participate in school decisions through a weekly School Meeting. In school meetings students and staff make agreements together, fostering leadership, problem-solving and accountability.

We chose to use the word *agreements* rather than laws or rules to highlight that the needs and wants of everyone affected are considered. This fosters a sense of purpose, empowerment and belonging. Students learn to take responsibility and ownership of their education, becoming more content, engaged, conscious and self-motivated members of their communities.

We self-direct our learning

At WCSS, students direct their own learning: They decide what, when and how they learn. Self-directed learning reaches beyond textbook-based subjects and has been shown to increase learning speed and retention. Students learn to motivate themselves, navigate conflict and voice their opinions in debate. They develop a sense of curiosity and un-learn the fear of failure. A responsive and democratic education changes and evolves as needed, preparing students for a future in a world of accelerated change. See the *How do our students learn* section for more information on what this can look like.

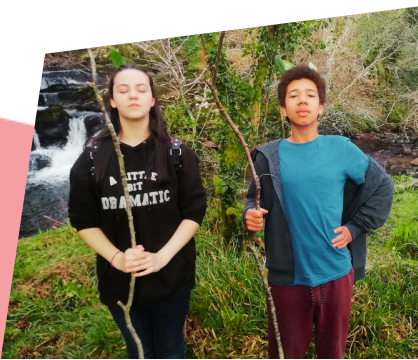
We work together

Using a collaborative approach to decision-making, called *Systemic Consensing*, we facilitate equal power distribution, considering minority voices and achieving solutions that benefit the entire group. Through *Systemic Consensing* everyone can contribute, even our youngest students. It also ensures the final solution is not just a favourite of some, but acceptable for the whole group.

When everyone feels heard and accountable, it is easier to accept a solution that benefits the group, although it might not have been the highest on your own list.

We educate for peace

Conflict, viewed positively, fuels meaningful community change. Inspired by *Transformative Justice* and *Restorative Circles*, we promote emotional literacy, non-violent communication and a safe space for taking others' perspectives. Our Transformative Practice techniques use mediation and communication skills to resolve issues without blaming, shaming or creating fear. Our students learn how to share, speak and truly listen. By changing the language around conflict and holding a safe space we foster a true sense of justice and reparation, as well as personal growth.



When we educate to cooperate and be in solidarity with one another, that day we will be educating for peace.

MARIA MONTESSORI

HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE

As an innovative Independent School perhaps the biggest challenge we face is funding — as we are curriculum-free, we receive no financial support from the government. Therefore, your donations ensure that democratic education remains accessible to students in West Cork and beyond. These are some impactful ways you can support West Cork Sudbury School (WCSS) and our community projects:

BECOME A SPONSOR

Be a Catalyst for Change by sponsoring a student for €4,500 or contribute to fairer staff wages with €7,000. Your support not only helps to keep WCSS affordable, but is a gesture of solidarity in working towards alternatives in education.

At WCSS, we proudly operate as a conscientious Social Enterprise, guided by a commitment to inclusivity. Our equitable sliding-scale model for Membership Dues makes it possible for many of our families — often single-parent households and those grappling with disability & illness — to afford the education their children need. To keep WCSS affordable for all, we rely on support from donors.

Behind the scenes, our dedicated staff works tirelessly, currently receiving only minimum wage and volunteering countless hours to make all of this possible. Your support not only recognises their unwavering commitment but also empowers them to continue creating meaningful change in the lives of our families.

Join us in making a difference today!

FURTHER INFORMATION ON BECOMING
A SPONSOR CAN BE FOUND HERE:



MAKE A ONE TIME CONTRIBUTION

If you would like to make a one-time contribution our Bank Details are:

IE92 BOFI 9026 0240 3907 36

We are also on PayPal:
office@westcorksudburyschool.ie

PLANT A TREE - GROW A SCHOOL

Join WCSS in nurturing a sustainable future! Partnering with Future Forests Garden Centre, we're committed to reforesting the once dense woodlands around our school and beyond. Sizable donations enable us to plant a significant number of trees, contributing to reforestation in Ireland and supporting WCSS's dedication to students, community and the environment.

Invest in a sustainable future!

LEARN HOW TO
CONTRIBUTE HERE:



LEGACY & MEMORIAL GIFTS AND MORE

Leave a lasting Impact:

Contribute to the growth and enhancement of our democratic, self-directed school and the broader democratic education movement.

EXPLORE DONATION OPTIONS AND
CREATIVE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES HERE:



For assistance or to discuss unique contributions, reach out to Jess at 086 303 1116 or to Kathrin at office@westcorksudburyschool.ie

Your support shapes the future of democratic education!



WEST CORK SUDBURY SCHOOL

info@westcorksudburyschool.ie
www.westcorksudburyschool.ie

    @WestCorkSudbury

Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) 20206027
The Educational Provision at WCSS is in line with
Section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

